

"Why I Left Society to be a Gypsy Queen."

JESSIE HABERSHAM, daughter of one of the oldest Maryland families, has revolted. She disappeared six years ago, and it now turns out that instead of being in a convent, as was supposed, she is a Queen of the Gypsies, has found happiness in the open, worships the dawn and is the wife of King Jorgas Michele, a famous leader of the Romanies.

Two amazing features of Queen Jessie's revolt are her descent and the fact that she took the course she did instead of becoming a militant suffragette. Both are noteworthy.

Queen Jessie is the great-granddaughter of Francis Scott Key, who wrote "The Star Spangled Banner." She is great-granddaughter of Mrs. Marie Lloyd Key, one of the most famous beauties of the South; grand-niece of Roger B. Taney, the justice of the Supreme Court, who wrote the momentous Dred Scott Decision, which hastened the opening of the Civil War; cousin of Lloyd Lowndes, a former Governor of Maryland; great-grand-niece of the first Postmaster-General of the United States, and a niece of a commander in the United States Navy. Baltimore society having given a

shrugging dismissal to the subject of Miss Habersham's disappearance, six years ago, is appalled now at the discovery.

"She always complained that she hated society, but this is dreadful. Don't you think her father ought to take steps, see an alienist or something?"

But A. W. Habersham, descendant like his daughter, of the long line of jurists, authors and soldiers, answers: "Jessie always yearned for freedom. She has had the wanderlust since she was a child. She tells me she is happy. It has been a long struggle for me to know what is the best thing to do about her, but I see now, after many years, it is better to let her follow her own destiny."

"Everyone in the world has the right to be happy, and we must follow our fate whatever it may be. My daughter is following hers."

From her camp in the woods along the banks of the Missouri, two miles out of St. Louis, the rediscovered Queen Jessie has given to this newspaper her story of why she left society to become gipsy and why she prefers the wild life of the woods to that of the drawing room.

By Jessie Habersham Michele.

I HAVE made my choice and am satisfied with my life. How many other persons can say that?

I am sorry for those poor, corseted, limping, weak-voiced creatures—society women.

I am sorry for them because they work hard at nothing. They are poor slaves in a petty kingdom. They are brudges, yet their work counts for nothing.

Their lives are like their bodies: corseted beyond comfort or proper freedom. They lead the corseted life.

I live in a pretty and comfortable little camp. My home is an orange and vermilion striped caravan wagon. I am happy in it, and I was miserable in my

father's handsome home in a fashionable part of Baltimore. My little caravan has curtains of Oriental stripes. I made them myself. The ground is covered with Japanese matting and with rugs of beautiful design. The stools are covered to match. My sign is blue and gold. Those colors appear on my tent and on the gypsy queen's wagon.

Better than any yacht or private car is that flaunting queen's wagon. I love it for the comfort of its slow, creaking way along country roads. There is no nervous strain of the Twentieth Century express in this sort of travel. And if we choose to stop in some particularly shady spot in the deep woods we stop, and perhaps we stay for days.

Perhaps all summer. There is no mad rush from one station to another in gypsy travel. My husband is a king. True, Jorgas Michele is only a gypsy king, but he is nevertheless a ruler. Hundreds obey him, and he cringes to no one, not even to me. Had I married in my old set, in my old life, I might have been the wife of a hanger-on, drive together, cook our meals together in a kitchen, and occasionally met at mealtime—a man who was

afraid of other men, especially of their opinion. My mate is a splendid fellow, with a red glow in his cheeks and the light of the sunshine in his eyes and fear of no man in his heart.

He never leaves me. We walk together, drive together, cook our meals together in a kitchen over a brush fire. He builds and feeds the fire, and I cook. We build and fish together. We are never separated. That is the safeguard of marriage—a safeguard that no society woman has.

The society life, especially the society married life, is complex, and those who live it are unhappy. The gypsy's life is simple, and the gypsy is happy. That seems to be the answer to all the questions which visitors to our camp ask me. The life that I would have led, had I not run away from Baltimore, would not have been mine. It would have been arranged for me by my family. I would have had to live in the city a prescribed number of months, would have had to go to a fashionable summer resort in the mountains or at the seashore for a prescribed number of months. We would have had to spend a prescribed amount of money, given a prescribed number of dinners, been prescribed corseted and miserable.

Now, when I awake in the morning, I know that if I choose I shall sleep in exactly the same spot, but that if I wish my gypsy queen's wagon will have carried me miles away; and instead of bewailing the dawn, I can rise and worship it. Nothing is done by rule or rote in a gypsy camp. We are like the wind that goes where it listeth.

I love the gypsy life for another reason. We are closer to the mysterious forces of nature.

And a gypsy is of proud origin. I am by no means ashamed of having married one. I might have gone title-seeking in Europe, and found a title, but not a man. In this gypsy camp I have both, and I have happiness.

I met my king six years ago when I started upon the life of a gypsy rover. He was kind to me and I grew to love him.

The Romance of the Much Ancestored Baltimore Belle—Great-Great Grand Niece of the Man Who Wrote the "Star Spangled Banner"—Who Fled from the "Corseted Life" to the Free, Ungirdled Open Trail

Queen Jessie Michele, Who, as Miss Jessie Habersham, a Baltimore Belle, Ran Away from Society to Take the Open Trail.

got used to it. I left Mount Washington College in June, 1902, at the age of sixteen, and opened on Washington avenue, Baltimore, a studio of genealogical and heraldic painting.

Old families patronized my studio and I earned a good deal of money. Soon afterward I had an offer to go abroad with Miss Cora Hodges, who was the niece of ex-Mayor Hodges, of our city. I traveled with her for two years as her companion.

Miss Hodges had a brother, Billy Hodges, a Baltimore architect and artist. He had a yacht, Dawn II, and was a member of the New York Yacht Club. Billy Hodges organized a party of artists to cruise about Chesapeake Bay all summer. One of these artists was Isabelle Price, a Baltimore girl, who had studied art in Paris. While I was visiting my grandmother, Mrs. Alexander Wylie Habersham, the wife of Lieutenant Commander Habersham, of the United States Navy, at Annapolis, me. Even while I was roaming through the old cathedral towns of Europe I felt this almost irresistible urge. We found the archives wonderfully interesting souvenirs of King Charlesmagne, who was an ancestor of mine. Perhaps for my turning gypsy was that I had

spent the afternoon on a yacht. Instead I spent all summer on the yacht. Grandmother wrote me that unless I returned immediately she would disinherit me. Three weeks after she wrote the letter I received it. I never answered it. She wrote no more, and I have not seen her since the day I left her house to spend an afternoon on Dawn II.

After that summer's cruise I returned to Baltimore, but I found everything so disagreeable there that three weeks later I departed with a band of gypsies that had been camping at Hollywood Park, Baltimore. In the band was George Michele, whom I afterward married. We were married by the gypsy rites in a little town in Pennsylvania, four years ago.

I had become interested in gypsies when I was a child in Baltimore. At Saratoga I visited other gypsy bands. Always I loved the simple folk and craved their life. The craving for a life in the open became a constant dull ache within me. Even while I was roaming through the old cathedral towns of Europe I felt this almost irresistible urge. We found the archives wonderfully interesting souvenirs of King Charlesmagne, who was an ancestor of mine. Perhaps for my turning gypsy was that I had

But I should rather think that it is an expression of the intense love of freedom which my ancestor, Francis Scott Key, sang so splendidly in "The Star Spangled Banner."

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mother's house, saying I was going to land. I'll never leave it.

My mother didn't want me to go. I very much wanted to go. I packed my things in a valise and left my grandmother's house, saying I was going to land. I'll never leave it.

I have begun to fight for this estate for my daughter's sake and for my own.

If I were by myself I would love nothing better than to throw all this artificial light of the cities aside and go back to the fields and forests. Once a gypsy always a gypsy is true—unless one has a greater influence to weigh against one's desires. First this influence was my husband.

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Queen Jessie in Her Camp, Where, She Says, She Has Found Real Happiness.

I WAS born December 23, 1885, in Baltimore, where the Bennett House now stands. I attended St. Faith's School, Saratoga Springs, N. Y., and later Melrose Institute, near Washington. My next school was the Woman's College, Frederick, Md. Then I entered Mount Wash-

ington College, in Baltimore. I refused to go to college, and went to work for my own support. I was then eighteen years old. A daughter was born to us and then the Count died. All his property was held by him only during his life and I found that what I had sold was an estate, properly mine, worth at least \$400,000.

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